

After 12 Noon, Tuesday, August 26, 1969

information from **GRUMMAN**CONTACT: J. B. Rettaliata
S. KerekesPHONE: LR 5 3873
LR 5 9501BEN FRANKLIN SUBMERSIBLE WELCOMED
TO NEW YORK HARBOR

NEW YORK CITY---The traditional fireboat geyser and tugboat whistle welcome was given the Grumman Aerospace Corporation's research submersible Ben Franklin today, when the yellow and white craft returned to port after a 30-day underwater expedition in the Gulf Stream.

Shortly before nine this morning, the six-man crew of the Franklin re-boarded the submarine in lower New York Bay for the final mile of the vehicle's home-coming. The men had lived submerged in the Franklin from July 14th, when the sub slipped beneath the surface off the coast of Palm Beach, Fla., until its re-surfacing 31 days later, on August 14th, some 300 miles south of Nova Scotia. The mission explored more than 1400 miles of the northward flowing Gulf Stream. The Franklin's crew and the various support personnel who participated in the Drift have termed the mission a complete success. Virtually all of the pre-planned experiments and mission milestones were accomplished, and a great deal of scientific data was returned for study. The full significance of the mission's findings will not be known, however, until scientists complete their lengthy analyzation process.

The Franklin was towed to a mooring at the South Street Seaport (Pier 16, East River) by her surface support ship, the Privateer. There, Grumman officials and other dignitaries greeted the crew and their sturdy craft.

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The Gulf Stream Drift Mission was conceived in 1966, when the Grumman Aerospace Corporation, already preeminent in aircraft and space vehicle design and fabrication, turned their vast talents to the field of ocean engineering. The firm signed Dr. Jacques Piccard as an exclusive consultant, and from his basic design of a middle-depth submersible, engineered and built the Ben Franklin.

The 50-foot, 146-ton craft was built in Switzerland under the supervision of a Grumman technical team and Dr. Piccard, then transported by merchant ship to West Palm Beach, where a special support and test facility was prepared. The vehicle was reassembled and final installation of electrical, life support and oceanographic systems were completed.

On August 21, 1969 the submersible received her name --- Ben Franklin --- recognizing that Benjamin Franklin was the first scientist to seriously consider the Gulf Stream and prepare the first charts of its course. Those charts were drawn during his role as Postmaster General, when he was concerned with speeding mail deliveries between the United States and Europe. By avoiding or "riding" the stream, mail packets could save up to two weeks off their trans-Atlantic crossings.

Grumman then put the submarine through stringent series of seatrials and test dives. The boat, designed to operate at a depth of 2,000 feet, easily notched that mark, and all systems checked out under the watchful eye of Grumman, U.S. Navy and American Bureau of Shipping evaluators.

The unique characteristics of the Franklin which allow her to drift, without use of her engines, at constant depths make her an ideal research platform.

With this capability in mind, the U. S. Naval Oceanographer Office decided to place two men and considerable oceanographic measuring equipment on board for the Drift Mission. Because the men were to remain in a controlled environment over the full 30 days, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration viewed the mission as an analog or parallel to future space laboratories, and they too joined Grumman in the mission.

The crewmen included Grumman skipper, Donald J. Kazimir; Erwin Aerbersold, pilot; Frank Busby, U. S. Naval Oceanographic Office scientist; Kenneth Haigh, British Navy acoustics expert, and exchange scientist with the Naval Oceanographic Office; Chester B. May, NASA engineer, and Dr. Piccard.